

General Property InformationFor Staff Use Only
DHR ID #: 032-0188

Property Name(s): Seay's Chapel United Methodist Church and Cemetery

Property Date(s): 1892 ☐ Circa ☐ Pre ☐ Post Open to Public? ☐ Yes ☒ Limited ☐ No

Property Address: 4916 Shores Road City: Palmyra Zip: 22963

County or Ind. City: Fluvanna USGS Quad(s): Arvonina

Physical Character of General SurroundingsAcreage: 1.964 Setting (choose one): ☐ Urban ☐ Town ☐ Village ☐ Suburban ☒ Rural ☐ Transportation Corridor

Site Description Notes/Notable Landscape Features: Seay's Chapel is located in southern Fluvanna County adjacent to the James River. The frame chapel is sited in a grove of large oak trees on a nearly two acre parcel, facing Shores Road to the north. Rural forested land surrounds the property to the north, south and west with a large open unfenced field located along the eastern property line. Shores Road is country road that, while paved, has no markings or median and dead-ends into the James River at the former community of Shores (a once-bustling stop on the Chesapeake & Ohio's James River Line). Seay's Chapel was constructed to serve Shores and the surrounding community. The majority of homes along Shores Road have been in existence for decades and the road remains very rural as it follows the undulated terrain parallel to the James River. The chapel remains in its original unaltered form in an excellent state of preservation. The chapel's façade is framed by a White Oak that predates the chapel with an estimated age of 200 years. Many who grew up in the area often remark how similar the chapel and grounds are to what they remember from many years ago. The original chapel together with its historic cemetery, provide a unique opportunity to visual the past.

Secondary Resource Description (Briefly describe any other structures (or archaeological sites) that may contribute to the significance of the property: The church cemetery was established concurrently with the construction of the chapel with the earliest interment occurring ca. 1898. The cemetery is located immediately adjacent to the chapel to the west and contains 131 marked gravestones and 1 unmarked gravestone. A modern (1993), wooden post-and-beam picnic shelter is located immediately west of the cemetery adjacent to the western property line. Sited immediately behind and south of the chapel, is a modest detached fellowship hall constructed in 2011 designed specifically to not detract from the focus of the historic chapel. The hall replaced a restroom building constructed in 1993 that had itself replaced a one-seat outhouse (privy) that had served the chapel up to that time. The chapel has never had indoor plumbing.

Ownership Category: ☒ Private ☐ Public-Local ☐ Public-State ☐ Public-Federal**Individual Resource Information**

What was the historical use of this resource? Examples include: Dwelling, Grist Mill, Bridge, Store, Tobacco Barn, etc...

Chapel and Cemetery

What is the current use? (if other than the historical use) Same

Architectural style or elements of styles: Carpenter's Gothic application of the Gothic Revival style

Architect, builder, or original owner: Captain James Henry Anderson (1835-1918, builder)

of stories 1.0 Condition: ☒ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Deteriorated ☐ Poor ☐ Ruins ☐ Rebuilt ☐ Renovated

Are there any known threats to this property? None.

Resource Component Information

Please answer the following questions regarding the individual components of the resource. If the component does not exist, answer "n/a." If you feel uncomfortable in answering the question, please leave the space blank. Photographs of the features can also help our staff identify specific feature components. Usually, priority is given to describing features on the primary (front) facade of the structure.

Foundation: Describe the foundation that supports the structure. Examples include piers, continuous brick, poured concrete. Piers of fieldstone. Spaces between piers later filled with concrete block.

Structure: Describe the primary structural component of the resource. Include primary material used. Examples include log, frame (sawn lumber), and brick. Also include the treatment, such as a particular brick bond or type of framing, if known. Dimensional lumber frame.

Walls: Describe the exterior wall covering such as beaded weatherboard or asbestos shingles. Original unbeaded weatherboard

Windows: Describe the number, material, and form of the primary windows. This includes the number of panes per sash, what the sashes are made of, and how the sashes operate (are they hinged or do they slide vertically) Have the windows been replaced? There are three windows on the east and west side elevations of the chapel. The east and west facing windows are sash windows with two panes above and below each frame. All windows are original and slide vertically with stationary upper sashes concluding in a gothic arch. Windows consist of cathedral glass installed in the 1960s (west-facing panes replaced in 2005 after receiving storm damage).

Porch: Briefly describe the primary (front) porch. List the primary material, shape of the porch roof, and other defining details. None.

Roof: Describe the roof, listing the shape and the covering material. Steeply pitched front-gable roof clad in the original plain-patterned slate shingles.

Chimney(s): List the number of chimneys and the materials used. Include the brick bond pattern if possible. There are two chimneys, made of brick on the east and west sides of the chapel. The chimneys served the two separate oil furnaces that heated the chapel from 1941 to 1991. Since removal of the oil furnaces, the chimneys are no longer in use.

Architectural Description of Individual Resource: *(Please describe architectural patterns, types, features, additions, remodelings, or other alterations. A sketch of the current floor plan would be appreciated)*

Chapel Exterior

Seay's Chapel was constructed from 1892 to 1894 in the Carpenter's Gothic style. The simple frame chapel is a tangible reminder of the many simple country churches that once served rural Virginia. The building has remained true to the builder's original design and form - no structural alternations have been made to the chapel since its construction. The chapel is 40 feet long and 30 feet in width in outside dimensions with walls of weatherboard painted white. The building is front-gabled exhibiting cornice returns at the pediment with ornamental brackets under the eaves and along the steep front and rear open gables. The building features a low foundation of fieldstone piers with concrete block added between piers to enclose the foundation. The roof is of plain-patterned slate which is original to the building. There are three large narrow windows on each side (all original) each having a two over two sash. The stationary upper sash of each window opening concludes in a pointed gothic arch. Since the 1960s the window panes have been colored cathedral glass. Historic images show dark wooden shutters once protected the window openings (removed in the late 1950s).

The façade (which faces Shores Road, State Route 640) has two sets of original double doors with each door opening having a pointed arch transom above in colored cathedral glass. As a protection from the elements, storm doors were added in the 1960s. The entrance of the chapel is at the base of a five foot wide concrete stoop with concrete steps. A well-designed handicap ramp was constructed in 2000 to provide easier access to east set of entrance doors. The original 1941 electrical service, originally installed on the façade of the building between the door openings, was relocated to the western side elevation in 2008 when the electrical service was upgraded. At the same time the electrical service was changed from overhead to underground to reduce the power line's visibility.

Chapel Interior

The double doorways lead into the paired aisles of the sanctuary. The original one-room configuration of the building remains, retaining uncompromised historical integrity. The plain box pews are original and may have been moved from the church's predecessor, the Seven Islands meetinghouse. Demonstrating hand-craftsmanship, the pews are hand-planed of large heart pine boards and attached with cut nails. The pews are divided by the two aisles into a wide center section flanked by two narrow sections.

The 4 ½ inch wide heart pine floorboards are original and darkened from repeated treatments of linseed oil over the years. A portion of the walls and the ceiling are clad in white narrow beaded pine matchboard. The walls are divided by a waist-high chair rail consisting of simple two inch molding. Below the chair rail is wainscot in which the matchboard is applied vertically; above the chair rail the walls are clad in plaster painted pale green. The ceiling matchboard is applied horizontally matching the orientation of the building (front to back).

The chapel was originally heated by a large round black wood burning stove located at the center of the building with a metal stove pipe extending to the ceiling where a brick chimney continued the flue thorough the ridge of the roof (since removed). Though no longer in use today, two exterior brick chimneys are located on both side elevations piercing the eaves. The chimney on the eastern elevation was added ca. 1938 and the large wood burning stove was moved from the center of the chapel to the new chimney. With the availability of electricity, an oil heater was purchased replacing the large round wood stove in ca. 1942. Later ca. 1958, the other exterior brick chimney was added on the western side elevation and another oil heater was purchased.

The altar occupies a semi-circular platform about seven inches high, and is cordoned behind a semi-circular balustrade with slender, turned balusters, molded hand rail, and robust, turned newels at each end. The lectern stands behind the altar on the main platform, but is further elevated by another semi-circular seven-inch platform. The pulpit furniture is original and was purchased with money raised by lawn parties and box lunches at the turn of the 20th century. On the lower platform, pews are arranged perpendicular to the main body of pews defining a small choir loft. Flanking the lower platform, against the western side wall of the chapel, is a modern piano.

Provided as memorials the charter members of the church, in 1960 cathedral glass panes replaced the plate-glass panes in the windows and door transoms. Small brass plaques are on each window with the name of the person honored as well as the donor. The cathedral glass panes in the west side elevation were blown out by a severe thunderstorm in 2003 and were replaced with similar colored (though not identical) cathedral glass panes.

Cemetery

The cemetery at Seay's Chapel contains 132 graves and is located immediately west of the chapel occupying approximately ¾ of an acre of land. The earliest marked stones date to the 1898. Families buried here include members of the Bugg, Johnson, Minter, Moon, Nixon, and Seay families. The gravestones that date to the late 19th and early 20th centuries are the most ornate; several possess considerable artistic value. The largest memorials, those of church namesake, Andrew Jackson Seay (d.1911) [photo 14] and A. Ivy Robertson (d. 1900), are more than three feet tall and made of marble, with square, stepped bases. Other burials of note include Ensign Elizabeth Irene Seay (d. 1943) believed to be the first commissioned WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) officer killed in the line of duty during World War II [photo 15] and Mrs. Eleanor Crellin Killey (d. 1851) who while traveling with her young family on the nearby James River and Kanawha Canal had the misfortune of drowning one cold December day in 1851. She was buried on the bluffs overlooking the canal and remained there for nearly sixty years until her son, Dr. Phillip Killey of Mercer, West Virginia, had her reinterred to the cemetery at Seay's Chapel in August 1910 [photo 16]. Other grave stones take the form of squared slabs, tall, slender tablets with rounded tops, or rectangular obelisks. Some lie flat in the ground and are nearly buried. The cemetery remains open for burial, and although interments are few, several are added each year. A perpetual maintenance fund was established in 1964 which is used to maintain the cemetery to this day.

Significance Statement: Briefly note any significant events, personages, and/or families associated with the property. (Detailed family genealogies are not necessary.) Please list all sources of information. It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or genealogies to this form. Normally, only information contained on this form will be posted for consideration by the State Review Board.

Seay's Chapel United Methodist Church has served as a steadfast community gathering place for 119 years weathering many fluctuations in congregational size. The chapel's longevity in its service to its congregation is a testament to its simple history. While Fluvanna County contains a similar Carpenter's Gothic chapel (Palmyra United Methodist Church), Seay's Chapel is arguably the best-preserved and the only one that remains unaltered in its original form and site context.

Seay's Chapel United Methodist Church is significant under Criterion A as a tangible symbol for its association with one of the largest religious denomination in the region and its centrality to a sparsely populated, yet well connected railroad community in southern Fluvanna County adjacent to the James River which to this day remains undeveloped and rural. The associated cemetery established with the chapel, is believed to be eligible as a contributing secondary resource. The building and its adjacent cemetery, with markers dating to the late 19th century, appear to be eligible under Criterion C for its completely unmodified (both exterior and interior) Carpenter's Gothic frame chapel that continues to serve the congregants of its surrounding rural community. Greater examination of the chapel's historical records and an in-depth exploration of the chapel's context compared to other rural churches in former railroad communities will expand and enhance the National Register documentation for this resource. Documentation of Seay's Chapel cemetery will provide rich documentation for the late 19th- to early 20th century society of the region.

Historical Background

Seay's Chapel United Methodist Church sits in a bucolic rural setting surrounded by woods and farmland. The chapel is in a grove of large oak trees with English boxwoods surrounding the east and west elevations. The façade of the chapel is framed by an adjacent and magnificent White Oak believed to be over 200 years old. The property also contains an informational church sign (of slate)[photo 11], a historic cemetery with multiple examples of late 19th and early 20th century funerary art, a modern post-and-beam picnic shelter [photo 12] and a detached fellowship hall located behind the chapel to the south [photo 13].

The history of Seay's Chapel United Methodist Church in Shores, Fluvanna County, Virginia began with the establishment of Seven Islands as one of twenty-four church classes in the large Columbia Charge of the Methodist Church.¹ The Seven Islands class was deeded two acres of land to construct a meetinghouse on December 21, 1830 by Adam Skipworth Harrison (1787-1864) and his wife Appelona Pettus Harrison (1789-1860).² Church records on file in the Fluvanna Courthouse provide an irregular listing of church members and trustees for Seven Islands starting in 1832 through 1874. Though no longer standing, the frame Seven Islands meetinghouse was located on the road between the plantations of Thomas Shores, Jr. (1755-1841) to the east and Adam Harrison (whom had bought the William Henry home place) to the west, on a knoll above a spring in a grove of oaks approximately two miles southwest from the current location of Seay's Chapel. The building was taken down by a Mr. Poindexter Jennings who moved the timbers to his farm and then built a stable from them. Shortly thereafter, the building was struck by lightning burning to the ground which caused neighbors to surmise that his misfortune was due to the disrespect he showed when he put the meetinghouse to such a lowly use.³ Today all that remains at the site of Seven Islands meetinghouse are the tumbled remains of the fieldstone piers and chimney alone in a lonely grove of gnarled oaks.

As the community of Shores grew around a mill, store and railroad depot, Seven Islands declined. In order to continue to promote the cause of Christianity, Methodists in the community needed a new home. This new home came when local community leader, Andrew Jackson Seay (1835-1911) and his wife Josephine Bugg Seay (1841-1933), donated land on Shores Road for a new church in Shores. On October 28, 1892 a deed of gift was recorded in the Circuit Court clerk's office of Fluvanna County, providing one acre of land to five trustees for the purpose of promoting the cause of Christianity in the denomination of the Methodist Church, South.⁴ This one acre is the present site of Seay's Chapel United Methodist Church. The church property was later expanded in 1958 to nearly two acres to accommodate a larger cemetery area.⁵

When the present chapel was constructed from 1892 to 1894 thirty-five members transferred membership from the Seven Islands class.⁶ Seay's Chapel was constructed by Captain James Henry Anderson (1835-1918) a local carpenter and Confederate veteran who also constructed Palmyra United Methodist Church. After finishing Palmyra Methodist ca. 1890, Captain Anderson started constructing Seay's Chapel.⁷ According to Captain Anderson's son, Granville Anderson, while constructing Palmyra Methodist Church, Captain Anderson kiln dried the lumber he later used to build Seay's Chapel.⁸ While constructing the chapel, Captain

¹ Holloway, Jerry L. The Churches of Fluvanna County, Virginia. [Richmond, Virginia: Cavalier Press], 1966.

² Fluvanna County Old Style Deed Book 10 Page 97-98 (1830).

³ Holloway, Jerry L. The Churches of Fluvanna County, Virginia. [Richmond, Virginia: Cavalier Press], 1966

⁴ Fluvanna County Deed Book 27 Page 96 (1892).

⁵ Fluvanna County Deed Book 53 Page 321 (1958).

⁶ Holloway, Jerry L. The Churches of Fluvanna County, Virginia. [Richmond, Virginia: Cavalier Press], 1966.

⁷ "History of Seay's Chapel" [Unpublished manuscript in the files of the Fluvanna County Historical Society, Palmyra, Va.]

⁸ Bugg, Jr., Mrs. Thomas Jackson. History of Seay's Chapel Church Shores, Fluvanna County, Virginia. [Charlottesville, Virginia: Mint Printing Company], 1973.

Anderson brought a load of building material to the site two times a week enlisting local people to assist in hauling the material.⁹ All of the slate for the roof was hauled by a team and wagon from the slate mines in Arvon in Buckingham County, fording the James River at Shores.¹⁰

Before Palmyra Methodist made significant 20th century alterations to their building (including adding a belfry, basement, attached portico and expanding the pulpit area) there was great similarity, in construction and materials used, in the two chapels.¹¹ Of the two chapels, Seay's Chapel arguably remains as the best-preserved and least altered example, remaining true to its original architectural form and in the same rural surroundings and context as it was when constructed. It is probable that Seay's Chapel also remains as the only late 19th century Carpenter's Gothic structure in the region that 1) still exists in its original form 2) is in an excellent state of preservation, and 3) continues to serve its rural congregation as an active religious facility.

Church services were first held on the property in a one-room schoolhouse which had been located on the property just prior to the church's construction just west of the present chapel. The schoolhouse remained on the property until 1911 when another, larger school was built a mile to the west on Shores Road. While the chapel was framed, roofed and sheathed by 1895 the structure was not completely finished and dedicated until 1902.¹² The congregation worked very hard in those early years to complete the interior (plastering and applying trimwork) and raise money for furnishing the interior (pulpit furniture the organ and other furnishings).¹³

Originally, the chapel was lit by two brass oil chandeliers – one which hung from a long extension rod at the center of the building with five lamps and another on a similar rod over the organ in the southwest corner of the building. Oil lamps were also attached to each of the six windows.¹⁴ A local African-American blacksmith, Mr. Tom Washington, served as the church custodian for many years; taking great pride providing a fresh bucket of water and in keeping the brass oil lamps shining, filled with oil and lit for prayer meetings every Sunday evening and for other church events.¹⁵

The Shores community received electricity in 1939 and the chapel was electrified in 1941 by several members of the congregation. After receiving electricity, the oil lamps were replaced by simple white globe fixtures that hung from the ceiling.¹⁶ One of the original large brass oil burning lamps is still retained by a church family.

The chapel was originally heated by a large round black wood burning stove located at the center of the building with a metal stove pipe extending to the ceiling where a brick chimney continued the flue thorough the ridge of the roof.¹⁷ Though no longer in use today, two exterior brick chimneys are located on both side elevations piercing the eaves. The chimney on the eastern elevation was added about 1938 and the large wood burning stove was moved from the center of the chapel to the new chimney. With the availability of electricity, an oil heater was purchased replacing the large round wood stove in about 1942.¹⁸ Later in the 1950s, the other exterior brick chimney was added on the western side elevation and another oil heater was purchased. A heating and air-conditioning system replaced the two oil burning stoves in 1991.

The pulpit furniture is original and was purchased with money raised by lawn parties and box lunches at the turn of the 20th century.¹⁹ The original organ purchased near the turn of the 20th century, was replaced by a new pump organ in 1919 bought for \$125 and the trade of the old organ.²⁰ The pump organ was used until 1943 when a piano was purchased. The 1919 organ also remains in the ownership of a church family. The 1943 piano has been moved to the fellowship hall.

Provided as memorials the charter members of the church, in 1960 cathedral glass panes replaced the plate-glass panes in the windows and door transoms. Small brass plaques are on each window with the name of the person honored as well as the donor. The cathedral glass window panes on the west side elevation were blown out by a severe thunderstorm in 2003 and were replaced with similar colored (though not identical) cathedral glass panes in 2004.

In 1964 brass chandeliers replaced the white globe lamps installed in 1941 and carpeting was added to the main aisles in the sanctuary.²¹ Amazingly, though installed nearly fifty years ago, the carpeting remains in place and in good condition.

In 1993 a small free-standing restroom building was built directly behind the sanctuary. The restroom building replaced an earlier outhouse which had been the only on-site restroom since the chapel was constructed. To service the restroom building, a well was

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "History of Seay's Chapel" [Unpublished manuscript in the files of the Fluvanna County Historical Society, Palmyra, Va.]

¹² Seay, Andrew Jackson. An unpublished personal journal covering the periods of 1895-1911 in Shores, Fluvanna County, Virginia.

¹³ Bugg, Jr., Mrs. Thomas Jackson. History of Seay's Chapel Church Shores, Fluvanna County, Virginia. [Charlottesville, Virginia: Mint Printing Company], 1973.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

dug and a septic system installed. The restroom building was demolished in 2009 prior to completion of an adjacent fellowship hall. Though the location of the fellowship hall did not encroach on the footprint of the restroom building, the hall did disturb the drainfield location. Therefore, the congregation felt it appropriate to remove the restroom building and relocate the drainfield as the fellowship hall was being constructed. Also in 1993 a free-standing picnic shelter was built west of the cemetery. Until completion of the fellowship hall in 2011, the picnic shelter was the only other permanent structure on the property. In 1998 a single-wide office trailer was located behind the chapel and adjacent to the restroom building. The trailer served in a temporary capacity for Sunday School and as a church office until its removal in 2008 in preparation for the construction of the fellowship hall.

The bustling days of Shores as a commerce center ended over 55 years ago as modern highways replaced the railroad as the public's primary transportation choice. Now, Seay's Chapel is the last community building at Shores. In 1997 with membership low and Sunday attendance down to three, a special meeting was called to determine if Seay's Chapel should close its doors. Due in large part to how the congregation helped shape the lives of our community members many years ago, the church voted to continue, and grew in membership. Today, the congregation is vibrant and continues to grow. Seay's Chapel provides a special sense of place, history and commitment to our community just as it did when founded in 1892.

Legal Owner(s) of the Property (For more than one owner, please use a separate sheet.)Mr. ☒ Mrs. ☐ Dr. ☐
Miss ☐ Ms. ☐ Hon. ☐

Andrew V. Sorrell

Trustee Chairman, Seay's Chapel UMC

4916 Shores Rd. (not mailing address, use applicant's address) Palmyra VA 22963

(Address)

(City)

(State)

(Zip Code)

Church website: www.seayschapelumc.org

n/a (use applicant's)

(Email Address)

(Daytime telephone including area code)

Owner's Signature: _____ Date: 10/18/11

• • Signature required for processing all applications. • •

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: Andrew V. Sorrell

Daytime Telephone: (434) 296-5832 ext. 3272 (work) (804) 921-1235 (cellular)

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)Mr. ☒ Mrs. ☐ Dr. ☐
Miss ☐ Ms. ☐ Hon. ☐

Andrew V. Sorrell

n/a

637 Courthouse Rd. Palmyra VA 22963

(Address)

(City)

(State)

(Zip Code)

AVSorrell80@gmail.com

434-296-5832 ext. 3272

(Email Address)

(Daytime telephone including area code)

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: 10/15/11

Notification

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for the department to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator or City Manager.

Mr. ☒ Mrs. ☐ Dr. ☐
Miss ☐ Ms. ☐ Hon. ☐

William P. "Jay" Scudder

County Administrator

Fluvanna County

P.O. Box 540

(Locality)

(Address)

Palmyra

VA

22963

434-591-1910

(City)

(State)

(Zip Code)

(Daytime telephone including area code)

Please use the following space to explain why you are seeking an evaluation of this property.

Seay's Chapel United Methodist Church is of both historic and architectural interest and a cherished landmark in our community. It is a hand-built structure adorned with the simple wooden elements found in the Carpenter's Gothic style. The structure retains virtually all of its original features and has had no alterations to disturb the original architectural fabric of the structure. In addition, the property can be found in the very same rural context as when it was constructed in 1892. Church trustees are proud of our efforts to maintain the chapel and cemetery and wish to seek official historic designation in order to honor this significant historical resource.

Would you be interested in the State and/or the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes ☐ No ☒Would you be interested in the easement program? Yes ☐ No ☒